Deh Cho goes on-line

Several communities receive Internet hook-ups

Derek Neary
Northern News Services

NNSL (Feb 15/99) - If everything went according to plan, Fort Liard, Nahanni Butte and Wrigley were on the information highway as of last week.

A pair of computer technicians from Yellowknife were to visit the communities to install the systems through the GNWT's digital communications network (DCN).

Jean Marie River and Trout Lake were on the schedule for last week. Fort Providence, which already had the Internet available through an Internet service provider (SSI Micro), should also be connected to the DCN now.

Brian Jaffray, a computer consultant with the Dehcho divisional board of education, noted that the DCN applies only to government agencies and departments such as the schools, and in Fort Liard and Wrigley, the health centres.

"It's the first step in using any of the tele-medicine applications that they may try," Jaffray said of the health centres.

As for the schools, they'll have access to the Encyclopedia Brittanica on-line for research purposes and a science program called "Brainium."

"This will give them relatively high-speed access to the whole wide world," he said. The Internet hook-up will also provide those government facilities with affordable electronic mail capabilities. E-mail was previously available but was done through a dial-up modem and therefore very expensive, according to Jaffray. As a result, it was usually limited to staff.

"If all goes well by the end of next week, they'll be doing e-mail and it won't be costing them additional funding," he said.

A future project will be long-distance education -- allowing students from smaller communities to take high-school level courses through computer technology, Jaffray noted.

He added that there will be some Internet training sessions in the communities in the near future.

"For now we're just trying to get all the wires, gadgets and gizmos in place," he said.

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